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## THE POSITION AND PROSPECTS OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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In the *Cambridge Modern History*<sup>1</sup> and in a later work, *Studies in Modernism*,<sup>2</sup> the present writer has given an account of the last three pontificates, those of Pius IX, Leo XIII, and Pius X. Each of the three was in its own way a momentous pontificate, and has left a lasting mark on the Church. With the present Pope a new period opens. It will be one of harvest. The passions unloosed by his immediate predecessors have burned themselves out; but their works follow them. Benedict XV will reap what they have sown. Also—and this is the real key to the position—he will have to meet the situation created by the European war. His is a pathetic, almost a tragic, figure; for it combines the appearance of power with the fact of powerlessness. Never was man less master of his fate than he. His infallibility binds him hand and foot; he inherits the legacy of evil left by his predecessors; he is crushed under the crimes of kings.

To the student of mankind few subjects offer greater interest than the position and prospects of the Roman

<sup>1</sup> Vol. XI, Chap. XXV.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, Elder, & Co., 1913.

Catholic Church. The issues raised are complex and, it may appear, uncertain. It is difficult to reconcile theory and fact; for while the Church professes to be unchanging, the outlook of Catholics changes, though slowly. And a "dry light" is not easy of attainment. The tone of Papal Encyclicals, e.g., is uniformly pessimistic; that of the clerical press as uniformly optimistic; visionaries, such as Mr. H. G. Wells and the late Mgr. Benson, prophesy good; scientific and statistical writers evil. Which are we to believe?

In any case it is well to note certain notorious facts bearing upon the question.

(1) While Pre-Reformation Catholicism, at least in the West, was the Church, Post-Reformation Catholicism is one of the Churches—of the fragments into which mediæval Christendom broke up at the Reformation; and this distinction is one whose importance it is impossible to over-rate. Mediaeval Catholicism represented its period—the Middle Ages; Modern Catholicism does not represent, indeed it is a standing protest against, the modern age.

(2) There is now no such thing as a Catholic country—a nation whose life, laws, and civilization are formed on Catholic lines. Nor can we conceive such a society as possible. Catholicism has become an individual attitude, and ceased to be a corporate fact.

(3) Catholicism is no longer world-wide, or even European, but Latin. The dividing line drawn in the sixteenth century left the non-Romance nations on the Protestant, the Romance or Latin—with the Irish Celts—on the Catholic side.

(4) Even in these nations Catholicism declines as civilization advances. The backward section of the community remains Catholic; the forward section sits loose to or falls away from the Church. "Of the Vatican's 190,000,000 followers more than 120,000,000 are illit-

erate. This means that the majority of the Roman Catholics of the world to-day consists of American Indians, half-castes, negroes, and mulattoes; Italian, Spanish, Russian, and Slavonic peasants of the most backward character; and Indian, Indo-Chinese, and African natives. These make up much more than half of the whole. Further, the great bulk of the remainder are the peasants and poor workers of Germany, Austria, France, Belgium, and Ireland. This aspect of Catholicism is perhaps the most important of all.”<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand,

(5) Catholicism bulks larger before the world than it did a century ago; and

(6) the Catholic population is larger. While

(7) there is a perceptible movement, known in France as the *esprit nouveau*, which appears to be making in the direction of the Catholic Church.

To which it may be answered that the part is not to be taken for the whole; that population as such has risen by leaps and bounds during the nineteenth century; and that this, taken with the fact of migration, accounts both for the increased number of Catholics and for their political influence—which is most noticeable in mixed countries where a small group of voters can often turn an election. While the so-called *esprit nouveau* is temperamental rather than either intellectual or religious in character, its ecclesiastical form is accidental; the substance is a certain timidity and refusal of adventure. “Vos protestations d’activité masquent un affaiblissement de la pensée française qui a besoin de repos.”<sup>4</sup>

In Pius IX (1846–78) the recoil from the French Revolution reached its height. After an episode of sentimental democracy (1846–48), he fell back upon

<sup>3</sup> The Decay of the Church of Rome. Joseph McCabe. P. 305.

<sup>4</sup> Jean Barois. Roger Martin du Gard. P. 444.

absolutism in politics and a centralized theocracy in religion. The achievement of his pontificate was the suppression of the remains of eighteenth century Liberalism which, in the shape of Gallicanism, Febronianism, and Pistoianism, still lingered in the Church. For details the reader will do well to consult Friedrich's *Geschichte des Vatikanischen Konzils* (Bonn, 1877). Never has Catholicism sunk so low as in his reign. The Pope was a visionary, and the epileptic tendency from which he suffered was the key to his personality. He was led by omens and prophecies; the atmosphere in which he lived was one of marvel; it was the age of La Salette, Lourdes, and Paray-le-monial. Antonelli threw a miracle or a dogma from time to time to the pietists, as one throws a bone to a dog, to quiet them, while he intrigued with the worst men in Europe for the Temporal Powers and the petty Italian tyrannies. He failed, leaving a legacy of hatred, unexhausted to this day, behind him, and the breakdown of his policy led inevitably to a new departure under the new pontiff. "Ecce, convertimur ad Gentes!" was the watchword of Leo XIII.

Leo was no less impregnated with the lust of domination than his predecessor, and, diplomatist as he was, he was even more imperious; but he was what Pius had not been—a wise, a wary, and a strong man. From the first this was felt. Caricaturists had represented Pius IX as a querulous scolding old woman. No one—and the fact is significant—ever represented Leo XIII in this way. He might be disapproved of, disliked, or distrusted; he could not be despised. For a man of his years and calling he possessed in a singular degree the instinct for fact. His most memorable act was his breach with Legitimism. The party, he saw, was effete and its alliance compromising. "There," he said, pointing to the crucifix, "there is the only corpse to

which the Church is tied." He was of the old order, and democracy was temperamentally uncongenial to him; but in his Encyclicals on the Labor question, as in the encouragement given to the *Sillon* in France and the *Democrazia cristiana* in Italy, he recognized it as a fact of the situation. The critical movement lay beyond his personal horizon, but he would not condemn Modernism. He can scarcely have loved the French Republic; but only a few days before his death he assured the French Ambassador that "nothing" (he repeated it emphatically), "nothing should make him break with France." He believed that he could catholicize democracy and science. He could not; the one and the other alike escaped and outstripped him. This was the tragedy of his reign.

But if he could not do all, he did much. He could not change the course of events or direct their development on other than their own lines. But he made the best where others before and after him made the worst of the situation; he arrested the forces that made for dissolution; he encouraged the higher and repressed the lower elements in the vast and complex society with which he had to deal. He left the Church respected. Under his predecessor it had been, under his successor it was to become, contemptible. While Leo lived, it was a power to be reckoned with; not only politically—this it must be for long, under whatever rulers—but in thought and life. It attracted some of the weightiest static elements of the body politic, men—of whom M. Brunetière was a type—who put unity and action before speculation, and saw in the Church the great centripetal force in society, the centre of gravity with whose removal or weakening the various elements would inevitably lose cohesion and disperse. The instability of French politics has made this point of view more familiar to French than to English thinkers. It may, or

may not, imply religious belief; there is a party known as *les catholiques athées*. But it certainly implies the support of religious institutions; and, as in France these are Catholic, a wise Pope will court the alliance of those who hold this position. Leo XIII did so. But—*do ut des*. There are conditions, if tacit conditions, to their cooperation. Can any stretch of the imagination picture the late editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* presenting himself at the Vatican under Pius X?

But it was not political thinkers only who ceased to despair of Catholicism. It was thought possible to graft the methods and conclusions of science upon its venerable traditions, and so to make the centuries one. These aspirations took shape in Modernism—an attempt to naturalize history, criticism, and the philosophy of spirit, in the Church. It was a dream. But it was a dream dreamed by the wisest and best men in Latin Christendom—a dream which it was, and is, well to have dreamed. “Il est beau non de rêver toujours, mais d’avoir rêvé dans son enfance. Il en reste un parfum et comme une tradition de poésie qui defraie l’âge ou l’on n’imagine plus.” Its Achilles’ heel was that it overlooked what is the distinctive feature of Latin, or Roman, Catholicism—the peculiar development of the notion of authority embodied in the Papacy, and the consequent relation of the Church to the modern mind-movement, which is that of a residuum left behind when the freer and saner elements of life have broken away. Were Catholicism to lose this character, it would cease to attract the social and cultural levels to which it is now so uniquely adapted. Those who occupy them do not think, and do not want to think. “Abide ye here with the ass, while I and the lad go yonder and worship”; they are children of the bondwoman, not of the free. Leo XIII saw this as clearly as his successor; but he saw also what his successor did not see—that a

Church incapable of movement will be left behind by a moving world, and that Modernism was a development of the human spirit which, if the Papacy could not admit, it could still less suppress. Seeing the inevitableness of the rising tide, he refused the unequal conflict; he temporized, and would neither sanction nor condemn. He trusted to events—to the weight of custom, and to the preponderance of the fixed over the volatile elements in ecclesiastical Christianity—to retain the equilibrium of the conflicting forces; which was probably the wisest thing that a Pope could do.

His policy, he hoped, would survive him; he did all that a Pope can do to secure the reversion of the Papacy to the one man of eminence in the Sacred College, Cardinal Rampolla. The Austrian Veto shattered the scheme; and the cardinals, who under his autocratic rule were rather subordinates than counsellors, scattered like frightened sheep. The *piccolo mondo cinquecentesco* which he had kept at arm's length saw its opportunity. A cave of Adullam, in which "everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented" gathered, was formed. They were ignorant and hated knowledge; they were intolerant and hated compromise; they were stupid and the signs of the times were hidden from them. The outcome—he was rather their instrument and dupe than their conscious ally—was Pius X (1903–14). A peasant by birth, a country priest by training, he possessed at once the virtues and the defects of his class—its simplicity and its narrowness, its piety and its guile. Imposed by the Triple Alliance on the Conclave, he was the Pope of a reaction, which, like most reactions, carried those concerned in it very much further than they wished or intended. For the temper of Rome is the reverse of fanatical. It is that of the permanent staff of a great public department. The men who compose the Curia



are of the official type—cautious, painstaking, unimaginative. They distrusted Modernism, being opposed to ideas and to innovation as such, but they would have met it with other weapons than the Encyclical *Pascendi*; they resented the policy of the French Republic, but they would not have lost France. Their disapproval of the Pope and his Spanish advisers was undisguised. Conceive the late General Booth Archbishop of Canterbury! The cases are parallel. Can it be wondered that to the day of his death Pius X was a stranger in Rome? He was unhappy in his choice of agents, and of much that was done under, if not by, him the less said the better. Nowhere did the malaria which hangs about the base of the Rock of Peter work more poisonously than in the Concordat controversy. The unfortunate French bishops were compelled to carry out a policy—that with regard to the *Associations Cultuelles*—against which they had protested, and to keep silence when the fact of their protest was denied, while the Montagnini papers—the *Fiches Pontificales*—give an unpleasing picture of the Vatican interior. The *camarilla* which surrounded the Pope was frankly detestable; both he and his office were degraded by contact with these bad men.

The Pontifical Acts of 1907 struck at more than Modernism. Much was condemned that had a historical position in Catholicism—mysticism, experimental faith, immanence, symbolism—all that spiritualizes system and inspires formula with life. What was left was bare, dead letter. “The Church and the Faith which the Church holds were made ridiculous,” says an article remarkable in itself, and doubly remarkable because of the quarter in which it appears. “But for those who desired to remain in communion with the Church, the farce became tragic; the most odious, because the least bloody, methods of the Inquisition were revived.”

The leprosy of delation, never far from the surface where ecclesiastics congregate, broke out. It was the hour of the spy and the informer; the sun of Apostolic favor fell upon the assassins of the whisper and the pen. "No piety, no simplicity can cover up the conduct of the *Corrispondenza Romana*. It was base, and crudely base."<sup>5</sup> What wonder that Father Tyrrell broke out with vehement words of indignation? "I have felt the moral badness of Rome and the Curia so deeply and acutely these last years that I cannot take service as a priest under such *canaille*. The Montagnini and Benigni revelations have extinguished every spark of respect for the present *personnel* of the Roman See. There must be a *débâcle*. After that, perhaps, a reconstruction. The root error was in 1870. Condense all power into the hands of one man, who may be a fool or a knave, and what can you expect? It would be a miracle if things were otherwise, and miracles don't happen."<sup>6</sup>

That a policy must be judged by its results is a view to which the moralist will not easily assent. The ethical element is in the long run decisive; men are moved, and will continue to be moved, by ideas. But let us take the force-standard for what it is worth here and now, pre-scinding from its ultimate value, and ask in what state have the eleven years of the late Pontificate left the Church?

(1) In 1903 Catholic scholarship ran close on the heels of Protestant. No Protestant had done better work in criticism than Loisy; as a thinker Tyrrell stood with Troeltsch and Eucken; no German or English historian ranked higher than Duchesne. Science, it was recognized, was undenominational; it knew neither Jew nor Greek. Now the Catholic Ghetto has been reconstructed. "Acatholica damnantur; catholica non

<sup>5</sup> The Church Times. Aug. 21, 1914.

<sup>6</sup> Autobiography and Life of George Tyrrell, II, 340.

leguntur.” Catholic writers are un-read, non-Catholic banned.

(2) In 1903 a generous ardor inspired the youth of the Latin nations. Simplicity, sincerity, the realization of the better self of individuals and communities—such were the ideals of the coming generation; materialism, sensuality, self-seeking had crossed the Rhine. Now an arid sirocco has breathed over this spring; the blow struck at the *Sillon* chilled and crushed its bloom. So with the Italian *Opera dei Congressi* and the German *Christlicher Arbeiter Verein*. The former was lay, the latter unsectarian. They were openly suppressed or tacitly discouraged; the gates of the Ghetto shut with a clang. The Index, as far as in it lay, silenced Catholic and non-Catholic writers indiscriminately—the thought of Maeterlinck and the speculation of Bergson, the piety of Fogazzaro and the erudition of Duchesne. It was a dull stupid tyranny, and it was as blind as it was stupid. Excellence was a sufficient reason for proscription; to be distinguished was to be condemned.

(3) In 1903 France was the eldest daughter of the Church. There had been friction, but it was less real than apparent. No love was lost between the secular clergy and the regulars. The bishops protested against the suppression of the religious Orders, but their protests were half-hearted. The Government had done what they wished done but could not themselves do. Now—“La grande pitié des Églises de France”! The official Church is bleeding to death from the wound inflicted by the abolition of the Concordat, and its consequent moral and material separation from the national life.

What is there to put over against these things? An attempted revival of plain chant; certain changes in the service books; the modification of a few fasts, and the abolition of a few feasts, of obligation; the admission

of children of seven to communion; the general enforcement of the *Ne Temere* decree of the Council of Trent, invalidating "clandestine" marriages; certain technical changes in the procedure of the Roman Congregations. With this, all has been said.

Atque utinam his potius nugis tota illa dedisset  
Tempora saevitiae, claras quibus abstulit Urbi  
Illustresque animas impune et vindice nullo.

Otherwise did the great founders of the Papacy envisage the world and life. So do shades mutter; not so do the voices of the living sound.

Benedict XV represents the inevitable reaction against reaction. He is a Curialist first and foremost. In him the tradition which takes the Pope from the highly trained officials who form the staff of the great Roman Congregations resumes its sway. He will not be influenced, it is safe to say, by ideas; he will say little; he will have little sympathy either with the dull obscurantism of his predecessor or with Leo's launch into the deep. His policy will be one of reserve; he will be prudent. But should the times call for other than the prudential virtues—for initiative, adventure, spaciousness of outlook—he may fail.

"Sarà, dunque, un pontificato di raccoglimento. Più che un pontefice, un capo, Benedetto XV ha l'aria di essere un commissario. Ma a vita e senza superiori. E un terzo aspetto, e interessantissimo, della crisi dell'autocrazia nella chiesa: l'infallibilità taciturna."<sup>7</sup>

He starts with one great advantage; he succeeds Pius X. No change, it is generally felt—and nowhere more than at Rome—could be for the worse; any change must be for the better. There is a disposition to make allowance for the immense difficulties of the situation which he inherits, to interpret his actions in the most

<sup>7</sup> Bilychnis. Oct. 1914.

favorable sense. And the war facilitates a new departure. Both the Modernist controversy and the breach with the French Republic are now ancient history; more actual interests absorb men's minds. Other lines of movement, ethical and moral rather than theological, are indicated. They have not, so far, been followed. The world is moving, surely and rapidly; the bark of Peter hugs the shore. It was a saint

“Che fece per viltate il gran rifiuto”;

but it may be made by an over-cautious politician as well as by a timid saint. The personal impression given by Benedict XV is favorable; no Pope since Pius VII has inspired so much esteem. “Le nouveau pape est personnellement très estimable,” says a well-informed writer; “prêtre digne et pieux, administrateur énergique, et cependant modéré de caractère. Il est politique, mais par tempérament, semble-t-il, autant et plus que par réflexion. Bien qu’il est intelligent, son esprit ne se pose pas sur les questions générales et de principe; ou bien, si une telle question se présente, il la décompose tout spontanément en un certain nombre de questions particulières, dirons pratiques, auxquelles il cherche une solution. Ce ne serait donc pas uniquement par prudence qu’il se serait abstenu de discuter la guerre présente du point de vue du droit, mais aussi bien qu’il n’y aurait pas pensé, ou qu’il n’aurait pas vu l’utilité d’une telle discussion. Il ne verrait que la situation donnée, l’état de guerre; et il s’efforcerait simplement d’en atténuer les horreurs selon ses moyens, qui, en effet, ne sont pas grands.” In other words, he is wanting in imagination, his horizons are narrow, he has little power of dealing with ideas. At certain times and under certain conditions men with these defects have done excellent work in the world. But in the European situation of today they are precisely the defects which

are fatal to leadership. The large view, the quick insight, the adventurous temper—these are the “notes” of the leaders of modern men.

The good qualities of the Pope set the dissatisfaction inspired by the policy of the Papacy at the present crisis in a stronger light. The Roman Bishop is, *ex hypothesi*, the infallible teacher in faith and morals. With regard to the former, he extends his jurisdiction. Question some subtle point of scholastic divinity; at once you find yourself excluded from the sacraments and cut off from the Church. Morality is another thing. In the face of the unprecedented horrors of the present war, Rome is silent. Treaties are broken, territories devastated, non-combatants massacred, women shamed. “But there was no voice, nor any that answered.” Not even the invasion of ecclesiastical privilege—the violation of churches, the killing of priests, the forcible detention of a cardinal—provokes a protest; the Infallible is dumb.

The answer—of which, to do them justice, those who make it seem somewhat ashamed—that the Pope, being the common Father, cannot take part against any of his children, is the merest trifling. The superior who keeps silence is answerable for the ill-doing of his subjects and becomes partaker of their sin. Not so did the great Mediaeval Pontiffs conceive their calling. Their dream of a theocracy, if impossible, was at least grandiose; when it was dissipated, an age of Epigoni set in. The Vicar of Christ became an Italian prince; and the possession of this petty principality was fatal to the larger conception of the Papacy; its memory haunts the modern Popes like an evil dream. It is here, not on the ground of technical theology, that the key to the situation of the Roman Church of today is found. For the politics of the Church explain her theology—not *vice versa*; a concrete wrong moves men more easily and profoundly

than an abstract error in belief. The Temporal Power did Catholicism more harm than the Vatican Definition of Papal Infallibility; the Laodicean attitude of Benedict XV in the face of the present unloosing of Satan discredits the Papacy more than did the anti-Modernist follies of Pius X. In France, which, even under the Republic, remains the centre of the Latin world, the signs of discontent are manifest. The reserve of the Pope with regard to the violation of Belgian neutrality, and the coldness (to use no stronger word) of his attitude towards Cardinal Mercier, have excited the surprise and indignation of the French press, which had expected to find in him a warmer champion of a Catholic country and a Christian cause. The Paris papers veil their censure, so as not to divide opinion by giving offence to the clericals; but the provincial journals are more outspoken. Special attention has been excited by an article entitled "Dieu n'est pas neutre,"<sup>8</sup> and remarkable both in itself and as coming from a well-known priest. The writer characterizes the Pope's protestations against war as "un peu conventionnelles et comme 'de style.'" In a conflict of ideas and principles neutrality is impossible: "est-ce que Dieu est neutre?"

"Que votre Sainteté, face à face avec le Crucifié, daigne se demander ce qu'auraient fait, devant le monceau des crimes allemands, les grands Papes vos prédécesseurs —Léon, Grégoire, Boniface, Pie, etc.? Auraient-ils toléré, ces preux illustres et venerables de la théocratie, le massacre des femmes, des enfants, et des prêtres? l'incendie des villes ouvertes? la destruction des églises?"

"Guillaume II a violé toutes les lois divines et humaines. Il a écrasé un petit peuple, loyal et fier. Il est couvert de sang et d'opprobre. Vous n'avez rien dit. Il a fait tuer centaines de vos prêtres; il détient prisonniers

<sup>8</sup> Le Petit Dauphinois. Grenoble. Jan. 11, 1915.

trois évêques; il vient d'outrager un cardinal de la Sainte Église Romaine. Vous n'avez encore rien dit. Pour moins que cela Pie VII a excommunié Napoléon. Pourquoi vous taisez-vous? Pourquoi demeurez-vous 'neutre' entre eux, abominables à jamais, et leurs victimes? Jésus-Christ ne serait pas neutre."

Such protests as these are untouched by Modernism; they spring from another soil. And their importance lies in implications of which those concerned are scarcely, if at all, conscious. What they show is that Catholicism is a spent force. Its weapons are blunted, and, such as they are, it dares not use them. The thunderbolts of the Church, which once terrified Kings, today excite no more than a modified fear in peasants. When the late Pope excommunicated a famous French scholar, his servant, influenced by his confessor, left him, but returned within the week. And the more conspicuous the culprit, the stronger the disinclination to proceed to extremities. The risk is too great. Even Pius IX did not venture to excommunicate Victor Emmanuel by name; it needed a Pius X to inflict this penalty on Loisy and Romolo Murri. And the world did not even laugh—it passed him and his sentence by. The present case, it is true, is not *in pari materia*; the crime of the Emperors shocks the conscience of mankind. But a Pope could not excommunicate the Catholic sovereigns of Germany and release the subjects of the Protestant from their allegiance without greatly daring; and the Catholicism of the twentieth century dares not greatly dare. It would be a break with the traditions of nearly four hundred years, a revival of claims long obsolete, and the adoption of a policy which, if a failure, would place the Papacy definitely on a shelf in a museum of antiquities; while, if successful, it would transform the Church into a living force whose action would defy calculation. Benedict XV is not the man to risk the venture. There is



no reason to suppose that he takes himself otherwise than seriously. But to believe that the world, even the Catholic world, rates the Papacy at its theological valuation, or that the venerable system for which it stands can endure the strain of a new birth or sustain the shock of a new departure—this presupposes mental and moral qualities of a very exceptional order. “I have not found such faith, no not in Israel.” It is not within but without the Churches that it is found. The Churches are stationary, not expeditionary, forces, and their piety is of the static type.

The two main features of the late Pontificate were, as has been said, the crusade against Modernism and the abolition of the French Concordat of 1801. With regard to both a certain reaction has taken place. The Pontifical Acts of 1907 have still further alienated the lay mind from the clerical; they have driven from the Church not a few persons whose natural place is in her communion, and repelled men of good will who were gravitating towards faith. The value of these results it is for those concerned to estimate. What we shall note here is the fact of a reaction, even under Pius X, against the “fool-fury” of the “insolent and aggressive faction” which had the ear of the Pope. Today bishops denounce Integralism; the *Tribuna*<sup>9</sup> notes the changed attitude of Jesuits: “Se veramente la Compagnia di Gesù ha deliberato di fare del liberalismo . . . gesuitico, non v’ e integralismo che tenga. Pio X passa; la Compagnia resta.” Benedict XV has little sympathy with or understanding of Modernism as such. But it is probable that he will trespass as little as possible on the ground of speculative or scientific theology. It is impossible to isolate so large a body as the Roman Catholic Church, or to prevent the Liberalism which is tolerated from passing over into the Modernism which has been condemned. There will always be a van- and rear-guard.

<sup>9</sup> Sept. 25, 1913.

The work of Rome in the near future may be less to take part with either than to keep the peace between the two. A certain element of make-belief is inseparable from the process; it is also inseparable from human affairs.

It is difficult for a foreigner to understand the shape taken by the religious problem in France. The country is not irreligious or even uncatholic, but it is anti-clerical; and since Catholicism is essentially clerical and French religion essentially Catholic, friction arises. The policy of Pius X undoubtedly embarrassed the government. The Republic will not go to Canossa, but it did not intend, and does not contemplate with satisfaction, the dilapidation of the churches and the starving out of the clergy; it was the obstinacy of Rome, not the will of the French people, which brought about these things. A few months ago it might have been thought that the "union sacrée" inaugurated by the war indicated a probable solution of the difficulty. The conduct of the clergy, secular and regular, and of the religious orders of women, has been heroic; the tie of country has proved higher and more binding than that of sect. Might not this patriotic collaboration be extended to home politics? By an inconsiderable sacrifice of *amour propre* on the part of the Church and the government, might not at least a *modus vivendi* be attained?

It is probable that such an agreement could, and would, have been reached, had it not been for the "neutrality" of the Vatican with regard to the German invasion of Belgium and French Flanders, and the horrors by which this invasion has been accompanied. The feeling aroused by the "neutrality" of Rome has created an entirely new situation. It may be open to discussion whether the Pope is or is not infallible, or whether transubstantiation does or does not take place in the Eucharist; but it is not open to discussion whether murder and rape

and robbery are evil, or whether a religious teacher is bound by the obligation of his office to denounce them. "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hands." The present age is not one in which it is wise to put a strain upon faith. Even by those who retain them, the traditional beliefs are acquiesced in rather than held with conviction or fervor, and their external framework—churches, creeds, religious observance—is increasingly regarded as a matter of circumstances and expediency, conditioned by place and time. The conception of morality, on the other hand, has extended and developed; its content is greater, its foundations are stronger, its horizons are larger than in any previous age. Were the Pope to speak out boldly, "Thou shalt not," the conscience of the world would be with him as it has never been even with his greatest predecessors. He will not; and in consequence the conscience of the world is falling from him and from the conception of religion for which he stands. The root fallacy of this conception is that it substitutes the outward for the inward, identifies the idea with its clothing, and forgets that the Word of God is neither system nor enactment but spiritual life. Whether or no the famous letter which appeared in the *Petite Gironde* (of Dec. 24, 1914) is rightly or wrongly attributed to a Belgian prelate, it is certain that it has been largely circulated in France and Belgium, and that it expresses the all but universal feeling of Catholics in those unhappy countries:

"*Most Holy Father,*

We have heard the declaration by which you have announced that you will observe a strict neutrality between the two camps in this frightful war which devastates the world. Respectfully submissive to the supreme Pastor and Doctor, we shall henceforth exhibit a like attitude both to oppressors and oppressed. If we have not done so hitherto, it is because we have believed that we found mo-

tives in the Scriptures for treating differently the victim and his executioner.

When the first murder was committed, God said to Cain, 'The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me; thou shalt be cursed.' When God announced the destruction of Sodom, Abraham remonstrated: 'Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee to do in this manner. Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?' St. Paul has said, 'Abhor that which is evil'; and in the Gospel we read, 'Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.'

For these reasons, Most Holy Father, we have pronounced anathema upon the barbarians. And for yet another—that our poor decimated flock should not apply to their shepherds the reproach of Malachi to the unworthy Levites: 'Therefore have I also made you base and contemptible before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have respect of persons in the law.'

But henceforth, faithful to the lessons let fall from the Chair of St. Peter, we shall observe the strictest neutrality between the martyrs and the torturers."

Bitter, but deserved, is the irony of such words. It is no matter for congratulation, for it is by no means clear by what, if any, religious influence its place can be taken; but it is matter of certainty that one of the results of the war now devastating the world will be a notable weakening of and falling away from the Roman Catholic Church.

Since the above was written, attention has been drawn by two exceptionally well informed English writers, Mr. Richard Bagot and Dr. E. J. Dillon, to the thinly veiled hostility of the Vatican to the Allies and to the ideas which the Alliance represents. Their papers, which appear respectively in the *Fortnightly Review*, May, 1915, "The Vatican and the War," and in the *Contemporary Review*, May, 1915, "The Pope and the Belligerents," deserve careful study. The former quotes the answer of a great Roman official, given with a shrug of the shoulders, when the massacre of priests and the rape of nuns which follow the track of the German army in

Belgium were brought to his notice by an agent of the Belgian Government: "Que voulez-vous, Monsignore? Ce sont les épisodes de la guerre."

The *Tablet*, alive to the fact that, under the circumstances, infallibility needs a defender, steps into the breach (May 1, 1915) with an apologetic article, "Infallibility and the German Atrocities"; the importance of which lies not in the defence put forward, which is thin and sophistical enough, but in the admission that a defence is required.